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## Unpaid and professional carers

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### Summary

- 'Carer' can mean a person who is paid or unpaid for their care role.
  - An unpaid carer might be a partner, family member, friend or neighbour, and the arrangement could be temporary or permanent.
  - Volunteer carers look after people on a volunteer basis. Often they do not know the person they are caring for before they start caring for them.
  - Different professional carer roles are 'care workers'. These include aged care, attendant care, disability support, home care and personal care workers.
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Many people have care roles. For example, parents care for their children, grown children care for their older parents and people care for friends and relatives who are sick or recovering from an accident. Professional carers are people who are trained and paid to look after people.

'Carer' can refer to both paid and unpaid, professional and 'lay' carers.

Below is a summary of the main carer roles.

### Unpaid carers

An unpaid carer (also known as a 'lay carer', 'advocate', 'peer advocate' or 'carer') might be a partner, family member, friend or neighbour. They could be temporary or permanent caring for someone because of illness, disability, a mental health problem, or an addiction, or for an older person with care needs.

Carers provide different types of care and support. Carers can help someone to be as independent and healthy as possible, and live as well as possible. Care and support can range from supporting someone to go to their local art gallery to support with banking, shopping and cooking to helping some people feed, bathe and dress.

### Volunteer carers

Volunteer carers provide support to people without getting paid. Sometimes they do not know the person they are caring for before they start caring for them.

This type of role might be provided on a respite basis (either through an agency, charitable organisation or informal networks) or as part of an ongoing arrangement.

Some organisations have volunteer positions that focus on promoting the health, wellbeing, independence and social connectedness of those they support. This could include visiting people in residential aged care or at home, helping with community transport and helping people maintain contact with their local community.

### Professional carers

Different professional carers are categorised under the general term 'care worker'.

### Aged care worker

Aged care workers provide care and support to older people in aged care homes, clinics, hospitals and private homes. They help with personal care (such as showering, dressing and eating), domestic duties (preparing meals and cleaning) and managing illness (such as helping the person to take their medicines). Aged care workers also provide companionship and emotional support, and help the person to be as healthy and well as possible while maintaining the person's independence and dignity.

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Aged care workers usually hold a Certificate III in Aged Care.

### **Attendant care worker**

Attendant care workers provide personal care assistance to people with a disability in their home or workplace. Depending on the person's needs, they might help with personal care and hygiene (for example, bathing and going to the toilet), lifting, moving, dressing, grooming, exercising or feeding.

Attendant care workers usually hold a Certificate III in Disability or Aged Care.

### **Disability support worker**

Disability support workers provide care and support to people with disabilities in the person's home (including residential facilities), clinics and hospitals. They work with other healthcare professionals to maximise the person's physical and mental health, providing companionship and emotional support where necessary. They work with the person to become as independent as possible and to encourage them to get out and about in the community.

Disability support workers usually hold a Certificate IV in Disability.

### **Home care worker**

Home care workers provide support and care to people who are unable to care for themselves or their families because of sickness, disability or frailty. As the name suggests, home care workers provide in-home care in people's homes (including residential care facilities).

Depending on the person's needs, home care workers might:

- help the person to take their medicines
- assist with daily living tasks such as washing, dressing and eating
- cook and serve meals
- wash, iron and help with other household tasks such as cleaning.

Home care workers usually hold a Certificate III in Home and Community Care or a related area such as Disability or Aged Care.

### **Personal care worker**

Personal care workers support people in their homes and other out-of-hospital environments by providing activities and programs to help the person develop and maintain their wellbeing. Personal care workers may help with:

- lifting and turning bedridden people
- personal care needs such as showering, eating and dressing
- mobility and communication needs
- implementing appropriate activities for people with dementia or chronic disease
- making sure the person always has clean clothing and linen
- rehabilitation exercises and basic treatment
- reporting any changes in the person's condition
- performing basic procedures such as applying and changing dressings (supervised by a nurse)
- reporting any complaints about care to a supervisor (if the person is living in an aged care home)
- developing language, literacy and numeracy skills if required
- achieving the person's maximum level of independence.

Personal care workers usually hold a Certificate III in Home and Community Care or a related area such as Disability or Aged Care.

Depending on the health needs of the person being cared for, personal care workers will work under the supervision of a relevant health professional.

### **Where to get help**

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**[betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au)**

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Your **local council**
- **Carers Victoria**, call (03) 9396 9500

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